

The Green Sheet

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Act 122 Changes Adopted by the Board

On July 5, 2012, Gov. Corbett signed into law SB 100 (Act 122). Sponsored by Sen. Greenleaf and unanimously approved by the House and Senate, Act 122 contains many of the recommendations of the Justice Reinvestment Working Group that was formed in January 2012 and completed its work in May 2012. In addition, HB 135 (Act 196), sponsored by Rep. John Sabatina, also unanimously passed the House and Senate and was signed on October 25, 2012.

Justice Reinvestment is an initiative of the Bureau of Justice Assistance that was developed as a result of increasing prison costs, recidivism rates remaining high, and the increasing number of individuals who are incarcerated and on community

supervision across the United States.

In January 2012, Gov. Corbett, Chief Justice Castille, and legislative leaders convened a bipartisan, inter-branch Justice Reinvestment Working Group. The governor charged this group with finding ways to reduce increasing prison costs, improve the criminal justice system and reduce recidivism.

The initiative uses a "data-driven approach to reduce corrections spending and reinvest a portion of the savings generated in strategies that can increase public safety. A comprehensive analysis of data from various state

and local agencies was presented to the Working Group. The analysis showed that consistent with national trends, Pennsylvania's reported property and violent crime rates and arrest rates have decreased, yet the population of jails and prisons and the number of offenders under probation and parole supervision has increased.

From the data analysis, CSG made the following recommendations:

- Funding is needed for law enforcement to deter crime through statewide efforts.
- Funding is needed for statewide and community-based victim services.
- Prisons should be used for serious offenders with longer sentences.
- Incentive funding should be provided for counties to divert misdemeanants and the short min population.
- Invest in strengthening the effectiveness of county probation.



Governor Corbett signs Senate Bill 100, now Act 122, into law on Thursday, July 5, 2012. Sen. Stewart Greenleaf, the bills prime sponsor, sits to the right of the governor. They are joined by Chairman Michael Potteiger, Sec. John Wetzel, Sen. Daylin Leach, Rep. Glen Grell, Rep. John Sabatina and Sen. John Rafferty. Act 122 brought significant changes to Pennsylvania's community corrections system and management of technical parole violators.

Act 122 (continued)

- Invest in improvements to enhance the parole process.
- Increase accountability and improve the DOC community corrections centers.
- Eliminate the DOC pre-release program.
- Use CCCs for parolees transitioning out of prison and for parole violators.

Changes to Community Corrections System

One of the most significant changes for the Board from Act 122 is the reinvention of the community corrections system operated through the Department of Corrections (DOC) and used by the Board. Traditionally, the beds in these centers were for DOC pre-release inmates and for parolees. Act 122 eliminates the DOC pre-release program as of June 2013 and designates those beds solely for parolees - either an offender transitioning out of prison or for technical parole violators.

With the elimination of pre-release, more beds are available for parolees who have been granted parole but who have not been able to develop an approvable home plan. These offenders may be released to a community corrections center in order to seek employment and find suitable housing rather than attempting to accomplish this while remaining in a state correctional institution. Further, more beds will be available for parolees who the Board has determined would benefit from a structured step-down environment

and who may need additional programming before being released back into the community. These additional beds for parolees will assist with the successful reentry of offenders into the community.

Technical Parole Violators

In addition, Act 122 involves modifications to the Board's management of technical parole violators (TPVs), who can be managed in several ways. As part of the sanctioning process, offenders may be sanctioned to half-way back programs located in community corrections centers or community-based programs in lieu of return to a secure facility. This sanctioning process occurs now, and the elimination of the pre-release program will make more beds available within the DOC's community corrections system for this purpose.

TPVs Returned to Prison or Jail

Some technical parole violators may need to be returned to a secure setting, such as a correctional institution or to a parole violator center. Per the new law, a TPV whose parole violation was sexual in nature, involved assaultive behavior or a weapon, who absconded and cannot be managed safely in the community, or who poses an identifiable threat to public safety shall be returned to prison or a county correctional facility. The DOC has entered into contracts with county jails to accept these offenders.

These offenders are returned to a contracted county jail for a maximum of six months and then

automatically re-paroled, unless they have multiple recommitments or violate certain rules. In instances of more than one recommitment, the length of time is six months for the first recommitment, nine months for the second recommitment, and one-year for third or subsequent recommitments. If offenders have misconducts involving assaultive behavior, sexual assault, a weapon or controlled substance, spend more than 90 days in segregated housing for misconducts, refuse programming or refuse a work assignment, they will not be automatically re-paroled. Such offenders are required to be interviewed by the Board for re-parole.

Parole Violator Centers

Technical parole violators who do not meet the criteria to be returned to a correctional facility are referred to a secure parole violator center. These programs are established within either a DOC-owned community corrections center or a contracted community corrections facility. Currently there are eight parole violator centers. Parole violator centers are designed to immediately address the behavior that is causing the offender to violate. Offenders are placed into programming and typically spend 60-90 days in the center, and per Act 122 the length of time is capped at six months.

In conjunction with the DOC, the Board developed a contract proposal through the Department of General Services for additional parole violator centers to be established as of July this year. The bids are being reviewed, and we anticipate that a sufficient number of centers will be

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established to effectively manage this population. Parole violator centers have parole agents assigned to them to continue to manage the offender and to conduct some of the cognitive behavioral programs that agents have been trained to facilitate. In addition, parole agents will be involved in the DOC's new pilot for Transitional Housing Units.

The Board views these changes positively for improving successful reentry and reducing recidivism. Parole agents must ensure that parolees comply with conditions of parole, but they also are trained in techniques to more effectively interact with parolees through motivational interviewing skills and risk reduction strategies. Specialized agents have been trained to deliver cognitive behavioral programming, such as, cognitive behavioral life skills, motivational interviewing, drug and alcohol relapse prevention, and employment groups. These programs provide continuity in aftercare treatment and programming after the offender is released from the DOC to the community.

Reinvesting for the Future

Act 196 created the Justice Reinvestment Fund to provide for the savings that is expected to be generated by the changes in Act 122. Per Act 196, funding will be provided for statewide and county victim service programs, including programs for victims of juvenile offenders. The Commission on Sentencing will be provided funding annually to carry out their duties as a result of the risk assessment instrument. Grants will be distributed for innovative policing initiatives, county jail diversion grants for counties who divert offenders with less than a year or two remaining on their minimum sentence, county probation and parole grants for county probation improvement, to streamline the parole process and for safe community reentry.

Women's Leadership Program



Pictured left to right are: Lisa Whary, Chairman Potteiger, Jennifer Goetz and Lisa Moser.

Three Board employees graduated from the Commonwealth's Leadership Development Institute in October 2012. They are Human Resource Analyst Lisa Whary, Human Resource Director Jennifer Goetz and Harrisburg District Director Lisa Moser. The LDI program provides professional developmental opportunities for employees who demonstrate leadership potential and the ability to succeed in positions of greater responsibility within Pennsylvania government.

Each LDI class participates in monthly sessions which are focused on contemporary leadership issues. The LDI experience includes opportunities to gain knowledge of current leadership theories, concepts, models and techniques. This is achieved through the use of discussions, self-assessment instruments, presentations, executive interviews, book discussions, case studies, networking and workshops.



Pictured left to right are Office of Administration Deputy Secretary Honchar, Melissa Repsher, Rich Podguski and Gary Holland during the program's graduation ceremonies.

Emerging Leadership Graduation

Melissa Repsher graduated from the Commonwealth's Emerging Leadership Program in December 2012. The program is designed to develop supervision, communication, strategic planning and critical thinking skills. Participants met once per month to work on various aspects of the Seven Pillars of Leadership model that was used as the program's curriculum.

"This program was phenomenal and very practical to supervision and leadership," said Repsher. "I hope our agency continues to refer candidates to this program."

Two Board Reentry Program Graduations Held

The Board's reentry program provides intensive supervision and oversight to higher risk offenders with a history of substance abuse, and it does so in a unique way by having a parole board member and common pleas judge meet with the offender on a monthly basis in the court room.

The program includes a case management team to provide individually tailored continuity of services for each parolee, maximizing their ability to succeed in the community. To be eligible, offenders must have been convicted in and returning to the county where the program is established and have at least 18 months of parole supervision remaining on their sentence.

The Board currently has reentry programs operating in Berks, Lackawanna and York counties, with a 23, 17 and 17 percent one-year recidivism rate, respectively, and launched Dauphin County this year. Of those offenders who graduate from the programs, over 80% have not been recommitted since program completion.

The Parole Board is in discussions with the common pleas courts in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia to establish similar reentry programs.

York Reentry Program

At the end of last year, the York County Adult Treatment Court and the Board's York Reentry Program held a joint graduation ceremony. The graduation celebration began with thought provoking and inspiring quotes:

"Nobody can go back and make a new beginning, but you can go forward and make a new ending."

"One day your life will pass before your eyes. Make sure it's worth watching."

"Life can only be understood looking backwards...but it must be lived looking forward."

To the casual observer, these quotes are merely comments about life. To the recent graduates they are life.

Surrounded by family and friends, many of the graduates were overcome with emotion and credited the program with helping

Pictured left to right: Judge John Kennedy, three York Reentry graduates, Board Member Lloyd White and Parole Agent Bill Menesses.



them to turn their lives around. The graduation included three participants from the Board's Reentry program, marking the 19th graduation ceremony for the York Reentry Program.

The parole graduates shared the following comments about their experience with the program:

- Ian received a 5-15 year sentence for burglary. He will be on parole until July 2021. Ian stated, "I appreciate the opportunity this program has given me. I am successful at something for the first time in a long time. I am now a productive worker."
- Marc received a 1-10 year sentence for a DUI and will be on parole until December 2019. "I am grateful for another chance. It really means a lot. I realize how I let people down before and how that felt. My success here means everything. This [graduation] program today is just overwhelming for me."
- Gary received a 5-10 year sentence for criminal conspiracy. His max date is January 2016. "When I came in to the program, I was tired. Tired of the life I was living and I wanted to go in a different direction. This reentry program helped to reinforce that positive and new direction. I appreciate everyone who has helped me."

Graduations (Continued)

Lackawanna Reentry Program

The end of 2012 also concluded with a graduation ceremony for the Lackawanna Reentry Program. Team members who participate in this program and who helped three parolees to graduate are: Lackawanna County Judge Barasse, Board Member Viglione, Parole Manager Missy Repsher, Parole Supervisor Suzanne Wilson and Parole Agent Tony Spears.



Pictured left to right: recent Lackawanna Reentry Program graduates and Parole Agent Spears.

Chester DO Continues Involvement with Special Olympics

For the past few years, Agent McMonagle has been involved with Special Olympics PA. This year he was not able to run, but he reached out and recruited others to run in his place during the Eastern Regional Fall games Opening Ceremonies.

The opening ceremonies include the Flame of Hope (Torch Run) run from Philadelphia to Villanova University to light the cauldron. The Torch Run is a law enforcement event and state parole has their own leg – Leg 4 – which runs through the Mainline, from Ardmore to Rosemont College. District Director Mark Carey and parole agents Tarrant and Theobald carried the torch for the 2.8 mile state parole Leg.

According to Agent McMonagle, “I wanted to recognize these three people who stepped up and gave of their own time (and legs) to represent parole and bring inspiration to Special Olympics athletes,” McMonagle said. “This is the second year that Special Olympics PA has done the Torch Run to open the games and parole will continue in the years to come by running Leg 4.”

McMonagle stated the Chester District involvement with Special Olympics is growing and continues to build strong community bonds with the public we serve and provide the public with a positive image of the men and women of the board. McMonagle added: “It is my hope that one day parole will be the leading state agency in the Law Enforcement Torch Run but until that time, the Chester DO will continue to lead the way by example.”



Pictured left to right are Agent Tarrant, District Director Carey and Agent Theobald.



Chester DO staff carries the torch during Leg 4.

Chief Hearing Officer Receives Community Award

Chief Hearing Officer Victoria Madden was selected to receive a 2013 Woman of Excellence Award sponsored by the YWCA of Greater Harrisburg. This annual event provides an opportunity for local companies, agencies and individuals to recognize Central Pennsylvania’s leading female professionals and community volunteers. Vicci will be given her award at the awards celebration in March and will be featured in the *March Harrisburg Magazine*. Congratulations Vicci!

“Women really can endure more than they ever could imagine.” – Victoria Madden in the March 2013 issue of Harrisburg Magazine

Erie County Officials Begin Offender Job Club

For the past several years, county, state, and federal probation and parole departments have attempted to build a foundation for offender employment initiatives in Erie County to assist offenders with a successful transition back into society. Out of these efforts a partnership was formed with these entities: Court of Common Pleas, Erie County Prison, the PA Department of Corrections, Gaudenzia, Gateway, Adult Learning Centers, Career Link, the Workforce Development Board, the PA Department of Labor and Industry, temporary employment agencies, prospective employers, Weed and Seed Project, Erie Institute of Technology and the Erie County Vo-Tech School.

Using multiple grants and in-kind donations, officials met on a monthly basis to address the issues of offender education, training, and employment. Out of this forum, the Offender Job Club was created to provide a two-day program dealing with employment-based topics.

The Offender Job Club

Intake Process: Eligibility/Referrals

Offenders who have failed to obtain gainful employment within three weeks of their release from custody are eligible. They must have a minimum of nine (9) months remaining on supervision. This program also assists those offenders who have been unable to maintain permanent employment. The program does

not exceed four weeks. Once employment has been obtained and maintained, the offender participates in a job retention group for a period of 90 days. The parole agent or probation officer maintains supervision of the offender, but may refer him or her to the Offender Job Club to better meet their educational, vocational, and employment needs.

The Job Club

Once he or she is referred, the offender reports on the assigned day to begin the group process and attend a weekly job club group meeting for approximately two hours. During this time, numerous topics to assist them in their ultimate goal of obtaining and maintaining employment will be discussed. Topics include:

- *Orientation to the program;
- * Personal strengths and talents;
- * Values/attitudes/behaviors;
- *Values in the workplace;
- *Planning and goal setting;
- *Job search, resume creation, job applications and interview techniques.
- *Answering the tough questions (about felony/criminal background);
- *Cleaning-up a RAP sheet;
- *WOTC + federal bonding program;
- *Professionalism, work ethic, attendance, absenteeism and how to be responsible.

Once the offender has successfully attended and completed the four-week series, he or she will be given a completion certificate. Their agent will be provided with a copy along with a summary sheet

outlining the offender's attendance and participation and the topics covered. A successful completion indicates that the offender is ready and prepared to begin the job search campaign.

Violations

Should an offender fail to attend or comply with the program or obtain new criminal charges, he or she will receive written notice of the violation(s). If appropriate, sanctions such as community service hours or an increased curfew may be imposed. Further non-compliance may result in termination from the Offender Job Club.

Meet Williamsport's New District Director

Robert Shaw was appointed in January as the new district director for Williamsport. Prior to this appointment, Shaw was a parole supervisor at SCI-Mahanoy. He began his career with the Board in 2002 as a field agent. Congratulations, Robert!



Tuesday, February 12, Chairman Potteiger presented Shaw with his new badge.